



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian  
Northern District of New York

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CONTACT: AUSA John M. Katko  
(315) 448-0672

## **FIFTH V-NOT GANG MEMBER PLEADS GUILTY TO RICO CONSPIRACY**

RICHARD S. HARTUNIAN, United States Attorney, Northern District of New York, announces that **DONALD JOHNSON, JR., age 25**, of Syracuse, pled guilty this morning in U.S. District Court in Syracuse to an indictment which charged him and ten others with conspiring to exploit their membership in the V-NOT Gang to engage in a pattern of racketeering activity which included acts of murder, attempted murder, drug trafficking, and robbery. **JOHNSON** is the fifth defendant to plead guilty in this case. The case against six co-defendants remains pending.<sup>1</sup>

At sentencing, **JOHNSON** faces up to life imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and three years of supervised release following any period of incarceration.

The Indictment to which **JOHNSON** pled alleges that from at least 2003 through May 2012 members of the V-Not Gang: (1) maintained a specific geographic territory within the City of Syracuse in which only gang members can sell crack cocaine and marijuana; (2) protected that exclusive crack distribution territory with violence; (3) obtained drugs from various suppliers; (4) projected a very violent attitude and responded to violence with violence in order to preserve their stature in the gang community; (5) used graffiti, hand signs, and tributes on their clothing to slain gang members to signify their gang membership; (6) used criteria such as a willingness to use violence, ability to sell drugs, and familial connections to determine membership; and (7) routinely carried and used firearms in connection with their gang activity.

There are multiple acts of violence and drug distribution set forth in the Indictment, including 1 murder, 10 other shootings, 8 other acts of gun possession, and 18 acts of crack distribution and/or possession with intent to distribute crack. With respect to the murder, the Indictment includes allegations that on November 26, 2010, gang member Kahari Smith shot and killed Kihary Blue on Interstate 81 in downtown Syracuse as part of an ongoing feud between the V-Not and Bricktown gangs.

This prosecution resulted from a long-term investigation conducted by the Syracuse Gang Violence Task Force, which is comprised of agents and detectives from the following agencies:

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<sup>1</sup> The allegations contained in the Indictment are mere accusations; and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (Syracuse Office), the Syracuse Police Department, the Onondaga County Sheriff's Department, the New York State Police, and the United States Marshals Service. The Onondaga County District Attorney's Office and the Drug Enforcement Administration - Syracuse office, also assisted in the investigation.

Further questions or inquiries may be directed to Assistant U.S. Attorney John M. Katko, who is prosecuting the case, at (315) 448-0672.

\*\*\*\*\* **END OF NEWS RELEASE** \*\*\*\*\*